
PRO-BREXIT MP: 'DEMOCRACY HAS BEEN SERVED'

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With British MPs having roundly rejected Theresa May's deal with the EU, Brexit hardliners say her defeat means Brussels should renegotiate. But what do they want? Pro-Brexit Conservative MP Bernard Jenkin is our guest.

"The United Kingdom is becoming more likely by the day to leave on [World Trade Organization] terms," a leading Brexit campaigner and Conservative MP has told DW.

Bernard Jenkin, a prominent member of the Vote Leave campaign to end British membership of the European Union, advised European partners "not to overplay their hand" and said he believed German car manufacturers still wanted to sell cars to UK customers without tariffs.

"But if we need to charge tariffs on their vehicles so be it," he said.

EU first

On DW's Conflict Zone, host Tim Sebastian challenged the MP on mistaken beliefs Jenkin and other Brexit supporters had that industry leaders in Germany would, with their own exports in mind, support a good deal for the UK.

[Rücktritt Brexit-Minister David Davis (Reuters/H. McKay)]

David Davis said the UK's first call after Brexit would be Berlin, not Brussels, for "absolute access for German cars and industrial goods, in exchange for a sensible deal on everything else."

"Well it's quite clear that in Germany the European Union is seen by the hierarchy as more important than anything else. More important than German jobs, more important than German trade with the United Kingdom. I have to confess I'm a little bit surprised by that, but that's a matter for Germany," said Jenkin.

The head of the Germany Industry Federation (BDI) said in the months following the Brexit vote that it was "extremely important" not to alienate other European markets. Wasnt this a valid concern?

"If that's the way they want to look at it," Jenkin said.

"It doesn't surprise me, because Germany has a very united political culture and is very in favor of

the European Union. And as the Article 50 process has been progressing, we've seen the rise of AfD in Germany. We've seen the rise of other right-wing parties."

How was this connected to German business's view of Brexit?

"It makes the European Union look like a very fragile political project with very tender and vulnerable credibility with populations in other European countries."

"Happily, we haven't got a right-wing party in this country because our parliamentary system tends to absorb those political and economic shocks," said the Conservative MP, who joined party colleagues in December in a bid to oust Theresa May as party leader.

Citing the election of a Eurosceptic government in Italy and its recent budget clash with Brussels, Jenkins said he suspected the eurozone "will break up because it's unsustainable."

What's the deal?

On the UK's own future relationship with the EU, did Jenkin really believe Theresa May had a strong negotiating position after the historic defeat of her deal?

"Look what's transpired over the weekend. The prime minister seems to be going back to the European Union, invited by Angela Merkel no less, who has said that 50 years from now it would look very strange if we didn't look back and say, 'well why couldn't they find a compromise?' And I think some kind of compromise is what she needs to find."

Jenkin said a compromise that would satisfy the Northern Irish DUP, whose MPs are supporting Theresa May's minority government, and many Conservative MPs could still be found.

"And I would invite Angela Merkel to follow up her offer to be compromising."

Why would Brussels look again at the deal, given the UK's lack of consistency over Brexit?

"I don't think the British side has negotiated particularly clearly and I do to some extent sympathize with our European partners that Theresa May's government hasn't been very clear because of internal divisions within the government," Jenkin said.

Broken promises?

The Conservative party itself has been divided over Britain's relationship with the EU and its Eurosceptic campaigners have been strongly criticized for disavowing promises made during the referendum. Were there promises broken?

"The Vote Leave campaign didn't make promises. We were campaigning," Jenkin told Tim Sebastian.

Confronted by Sebastian over the comments of the former Brexit secretary David Davis, who said Britain would have free trade deals before leaving the EU, Jenkin blamed "overconfidence" and

Theresa May's failure to unite the cabinet around a proposal.

"And then the whole Irish border question has been confected as a mechanism to try and split the United Kingdom in a way that's completely unacceptable. And I don't know why the prime minister ever accepted the premise of that discussion."

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